

THE BINDING OF YAMM:
A NEW EDITION OF THE UGARITIC TEXT *KTU* 1.83*

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I. INTRODUCTION

KTU 1.83 (RS 16.266, initially published as *PRU* II: 3) is a small mythological or incantational text discovered in the royal palace of Ugarit during the 1952 season of excavations. It was the only literary text found among a hodgepodge of some twenty tablets and fragments in Room 73. The collection in this room cannot be considered a coherent archive, since the room was apparently closed off and abandoned sometime before the final destruction of the palace. Whatever archive may have been located here was apparently removed, with the exception of these few tablets, found scattered on the floor. They were primarily administrative in nature, along with a few letters, and must have been considered expendable.¹

The tablet is currently housed at the National Museum in Damascus. It measures ca. 6.3 cm in height and 5.3 cm in width, but is broken on the top. In spite of the damage, very little of the height of the tablet appears lost. Most of the obverse and the lower edge are preserved, with probably no more than one or two lines missing at the top of the obverse. Unfortunately, the surface of the reverse is completely lost, but letters from lines on the back are found on the upper right edge, indicating that most, if not all, of the reverse was originally inscribed. The complete tablet therefore contained probably 25 to 27 lines of which about half are preserved.

KTU 1.83 is fairly well known in Ugaritic circles because it appears to describe a conflict between Tunnan (biblical Tannin),² the Sea Dragon, and an unnamed opponent, most commonly identified as Anat. Complete translations have been published by U. Oldenburg,³

* The following abbreviations are used in this article:
ARTU = Johannes C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Leiden, 1987).

CARTU = *A Cuneiform Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*, Semitic Studies Series 6 (Leiden, 1987).

KTU = M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976).

*KTU*² = M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (Münster, 1995).

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0022-2968/98/5704-0002\$2.00.

PRU II = Charles Virolleaud, *Le Palais Royal d'Ugarit II*. Mission de Ras Shamra, vol. 7 (Paris, 1957).

TO II = André Caquot, Jean-Michel de Tarragon, and Jésus-Luis Cunchillos, *Textes Ougaritiques, Tome II: Textes religieux, rituels, correspondance* (Paris, 1989).

UT = Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome, 1965).

WUS = Joseph Aistleitner, *Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache* (Berlin, 1965).

¹ For a discussion of the archaeological context of these tablets, see *PRU* II, pp. ix–xiii.

² The Ugaritic pronunciation is found in the polyglot vocabulary list, *Ugaritica* V: no. 137: Obv. I: 8' [...] *tu-un-na-nu*.

³ Ulf Oldenburg, *The Conflict between El and Ba'al in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden, 1969), pp. 198–99.

A. Caquot,⁴ and J. de Moor,⁵ but the text is very difficult, with a number of obscurities in vocabulary. The specific genre of the text also remains uncertain. The small size of the tablet indicates that it is not the kind of literary text exemplified by the large Baal tablets, *KTU* 1.1–6. It seems, rather, to present a brief excerpt from a larger narrative, presumably for some specific function which remains unclear.

KTU 1.83 was studied by me during a trip to Syria in March 1995.⁶ Upon examining the text, it was found that the currently available transcriptions of the tablet (*PRU II* and *KTU*²) contain a sufficient number of errors to warrant the publication of this new edition, supported by photographs. In comparing the following transcription with the previous two, one will find that it agrees with C. Virolleaud (*PRU II*) against *KTU*² three times,⁷ all three readings having a bearing on the interpretation of the text. It agrees with *KTU*² against *PRU II* seven times,⁸ all of which again have direct bearing on the interpretation of the text. In addition, there are eight cases where the new reading disagrees with both previous editions,⁹ and there are seven new letters and three new word dividers not noted in either edition.¹⁰ All but two of these letters and two of the word dividers are of significance to the understanding of the text. These eighteen new readings constitute nearly 16 percent of the entire preserved text of the tablet, which presently contains only 114 characters.

In May 1996, Pierre Bordreuil and Dennis Pardee kindly collated the entire tablet in Damascus and particularly examined the areas of new readings. Besides confirming readings for me, they also made some very helpful suggestions, noted below. I thank them for their kind help and cooperation.¹¹

⁴ *TO II*, pp. 28–30.

⁵ *ARTU*, pp. 181–82.

⁶ I thank Sultan Muhesen, Director General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria, for his permission to examine and photograph 1.83 and the staff of the Directorate and the Museum for their extraordinary hospitality and help during our stay. Photographs were taken by me and Theodore Lewis of the University of Georgia using a large format camera (4 × 5-inch sheet film). For each camera setup, a series of at least nine photos was taken, including three color transparencies, two color negatives, two black-and-white high resolution negatives, and two high contrast, ultra-high-resolution black-and-white negatives. The trip was undertaken with support from the Research Board of the University of Illinois and the Research Council of the University of Georgia, as well as the West Semitic Research Project (WSRP), directed by Bruce Zuckerman of the University of Southern California. It was part of a larger WSRP photographic project on the Ugaritic tablets entitled *The Ugaritic Tablets Digital Edition*, which will eventually provide image-based editions of the Ugaritic tablets on CD-ROM.

⁷ The instances are as follows:

Line 4: *PRU* = *t* *KTU* = *c*

Line 6: *PRU* = *t* *KTU* = *c*

Line 13: *PRU* = *m* *KTU* = []

⁸ The instances where I agree with *KTU* against *PRU* are:

Obv.

Line 8: *PRU* = *tnn* *KTU* = *tan*

Line 10: *PRU* = *lbt* *KTU* = *lbn*

Line 11: *PRU* = [] *KTU* = *n*. (two characters)

Line 13: *PRU* = *ltp* *KTU* = *ltp*

Line 14: *PRU* = *n*[] *KTU* = *th* (two characters)

⁹ These instances are:

Obv.

Line 10 *PRU* = *lbt*[] *KTU* = *lbnt* *WPT* = *lbn*
(last *n*)

Line 11 *PRU* and *KTU* = *tb^c* *WPT* = *tbt*

Line 11 *PRU* = [] *KTU* = *ssst* *WPT* = *yym*
(three characters)

Line 12 *PRU* = [] *KTU* = *pt* *WPT* = *yn* (two characters)

Rev.

Line 7 *PRU* and *KTU* = *mt* *WPT* = *xgt*

¹⁰ The new letters are the following:

Obv.

Line 11: the second *m* in *yymm*

Line 12: the word divider after *hmlt*; the last two letters of *ynhr*

Line 13: the *h* and word divider in *ltp_h*; the *k* in *mk*

Line 14: the *r* and word divider in *thmr*.

Rev.

Line 1: the *r*

¹¹ Following this collation, Pardee kindly sent me the notes from his collation of the tablet made in 1981. He had found most of the new readings presented here at that time. Whether the tablet had been cleaned between the time the earlier published collations were made and 1981 is unclear. In the summer of 1997, I

II. *KTU* 1.83—TEXT AND EPIGRAPHIC NOTES

Obv.

1]ṛx[
]xil.[
 xx]un.barṣ
 mḥnm.trpym
5 lšnm.tlḥk.
 šmm.tṛp
 ym.dnbtm.
 tan.lšbm
 tšt.ṛks
10 lmrym.lbnñ
 pl.tbṭn.yymm
 hmlt.ḥt.ynhṛ
 ltph.mk
 tḥmr.[

Rev.

1 ṛ[]
 []
 []
 []
5 []
 []
 []xḡt
 []š

Notes on the Text

Obverse (see figs. 1 and 2)

Line 1. *ṛ*. The two small lower left wedges are completely preserved, and the lower part of the large right wedge of the letter is also visible. There is no doubt about the reading. To the right of the *r* a small piece of a wedge can be seen. It may be the bottom of a word divider, but it could also be the lower left corner of a horizontal wedge.

Line 2. *x*. Bordreuil and Pardee noted traces of the lower side of three horizontal wedges that might be an *n* or the lower part of a *d*. They do not appear in the photograph.

Line 4. *mḥnm* Two letters of this word, often interpreted as the place-name, Mahanaim, are damaged. The *m*, while broken, is certain, with slight traces of the meeting point

was able to look at the cast of the tablet in the collection of the Mission Archéologique de Ras Shamra in Paris and found that it indicated the presence of virtually none of the letters in the lower right quadrant that

constitute most of the new readings. The visible letters on the cast correspond very closely to what Virolleaud read. Whether it was a poor cast or whether the tablet was subsequently cleaned is unclear.

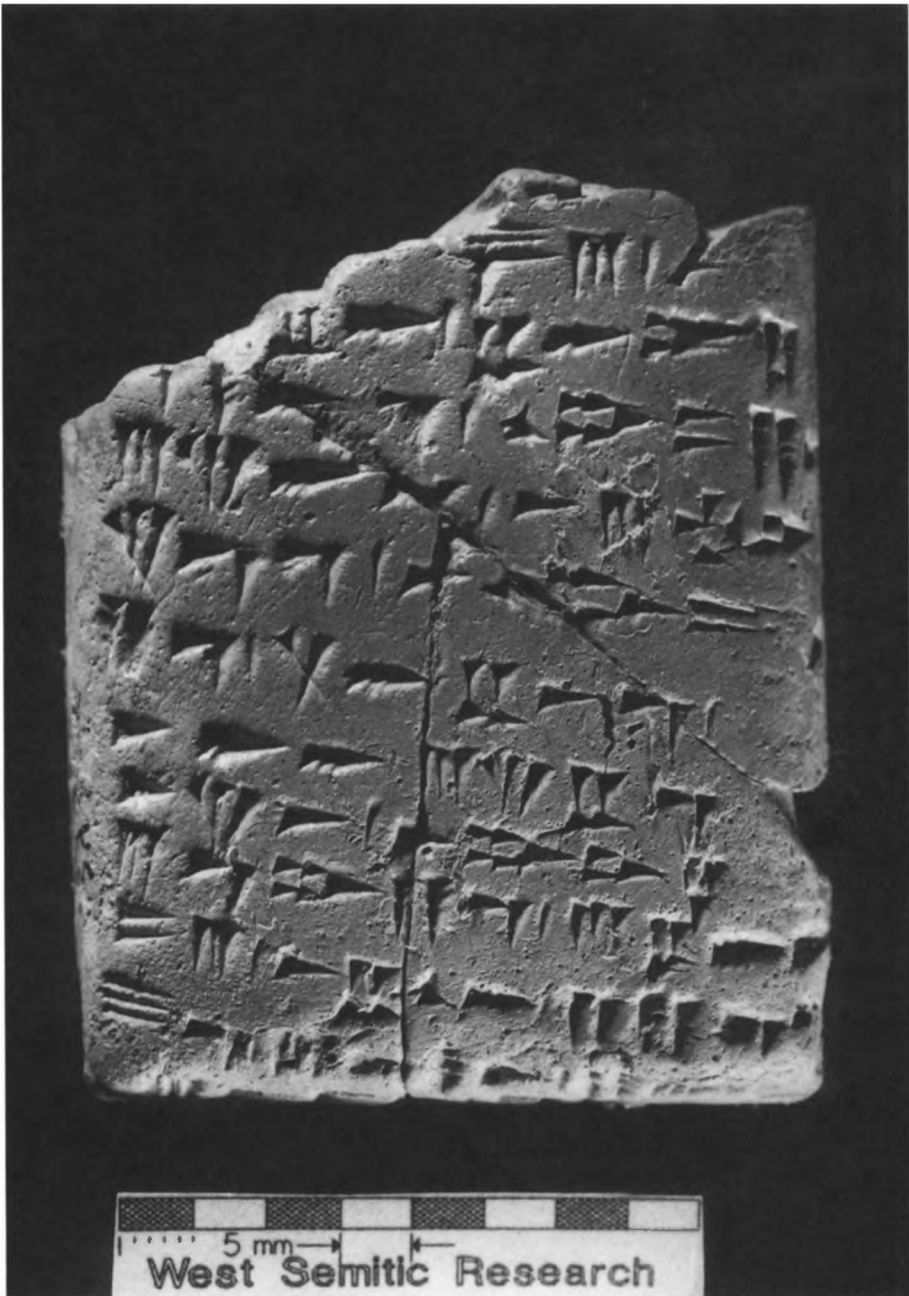
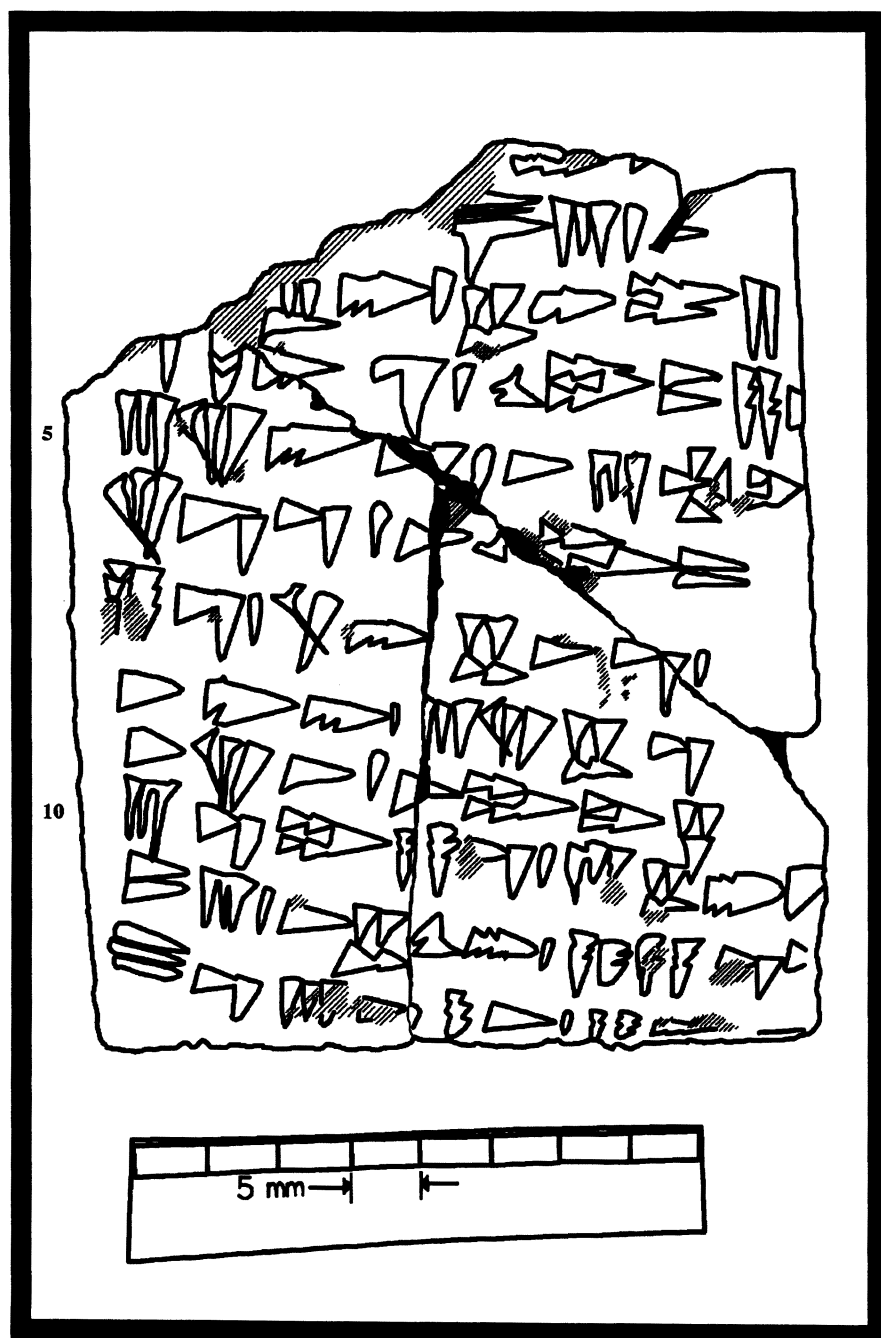


FIG. 1.—KTU 1.83, obverse, showing lines 1-12

FIG. 2.—Drawing of *KTU* 1.83, obverse

of the horizontal wedge with the vertical just visible. The third letter is also broken. There is an unfortunate crack through it that makes it difficult to determine the number of wedges with certainty. Two horizontals are easily visible. Traces of a third seem slightly visible directly at the break, and Bordreuil and Pardee, in their collation, regard the letter as certainly an *n*.

trpym (Line 4) and *tīrp* (Line 6). *KTU* and *KTU*² hesitantly read *rp*, rather than *trp* for both occurrences of this verb. But it is clear that the first root letter in each case is made of two superimposed wedges of the style used to make the *t*. In line 6, the *t* is damaged by the crack in the tablet, but there are still clear indications of two wedges along the upper left line of the letter.

Line 8. *tan*. There is no doubt that the second sign is an *a*, rather than an *n*, as initially read in *PRU II*. The two wedges are completely clear. This word is, however, usually emended to *tnn*.

Line 9. *irks*. Although the *t* is damaged by a crack, there is no doubt about its identity.

Line 10. *lbn̄n*. The third letter of this word was originally read as a *t* in *PRU II*, followed by a break in the tablet in which nothing could be read. *KRU*² read the third letter as a damaged *n*, and the fourth letter as a *t*. Although the lower right corner of the tablet is a bit worn, the third letter is undoubtedly an *n*, with all three of the wedges clearly visible in figure 5 (as well as in fig. 1). The fourth letter is also fairly well preserved as a long horizontal letter. The reading of *KTU* is ruled out by the clear evidence of multiple wedges as seen in figures 3–4. While two wedges immediately are distinguishable, there are also faint traces along the lower line of the letter of a third wedge, the middle one of an *n*. Bordreuil and Pardee confirmed the third wedge during their collation.

Line 11. *tb̄tn*. This verb was read *tb̄* in *PRU*, and *tb̄n* in *KTU*². I believe that this is partially under the influence of the recognition here of a common Ugaritic verb, *tb̄*. As figures 1 and 3 show quite clearly, however, the third letter is made up of two distinct wedges, rather than the single wedge of the *ayin*. We must identify this letter as a *t*.

ymm. Here our reading differs entirely from previous editions of the text. Virolleaud at this point read nothing at all in *PRU*. Both editions of *KTU* read *šst*, with considerable reservation. Figure 5 shows the first three letters of this word in some detail. While each of the first two letters is made up of two verticals, they are both certainly to be read as *y* instead of *š*. Although the surface of the wedges is worn, the shadows inside the first letter show irregularities that indicate the presence of three short vertical wedges in each, rather than the single long, smooth wedge of the *š*. The same can be said for the right vertical of the second letter, which also shows unmistakable evidence of three wedges.

The editors of *KTU*² missed the vertical wedge of the *m* that follows the two *ys* at the edge of the tablet. The vertical is short because of the letter's proximity to the bottom edge of the tablet. None of the previous editions noted the second *m* that follows around the right corner of the tablet, but which is entirely preserved, as can be seen in figure 3.

Line 12. *hmlt*. This line begins on the front face of the tablet, but the second half curves down onto the bottom edge. The word divider, not noted in previous editions, is broken by the large vertical crack that divides the middle of the tablet. But the right side of the divider is well preserved (fig. 1 shows it best).

ynh̄r. Following *h̄t*, Virolleaud did not venture a reading. *KTU*² tentatively proposed *pt*[]. But here too the photograph (fig. 7) shows the correct reading, *ynh*, along the upper right part of the lower edge. Although the *n* and *h* are both worn, there can be no doubt about the reading in either case.



FIG. 3.—*KTU* 1.83, right edge

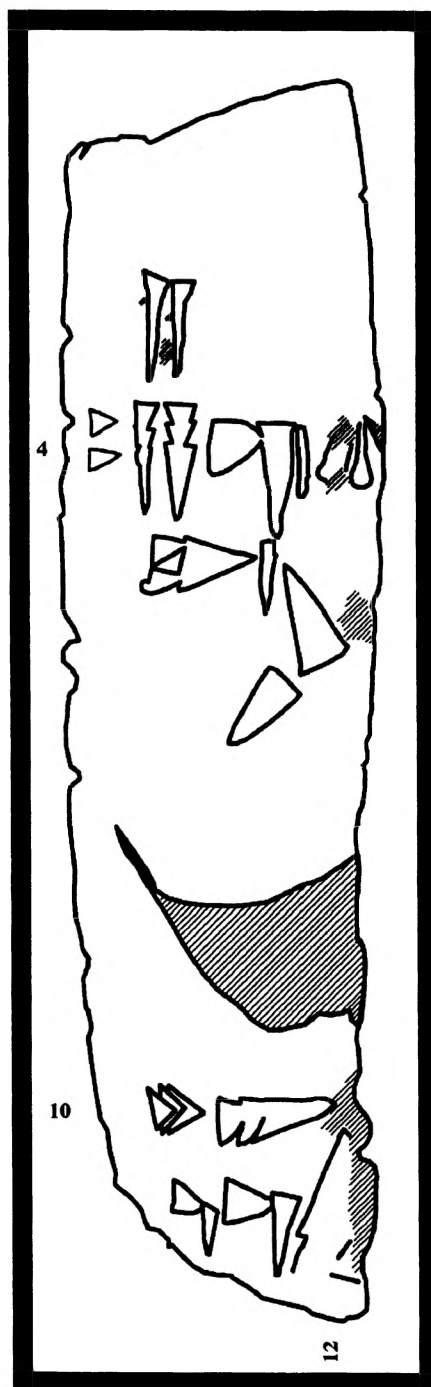


FIG. 4.—Drawing of *KTU* 1.83, right edge



FIG. 5.—*KTU* 1.83, obverse, lower right, showing the right portions of lines 7-12

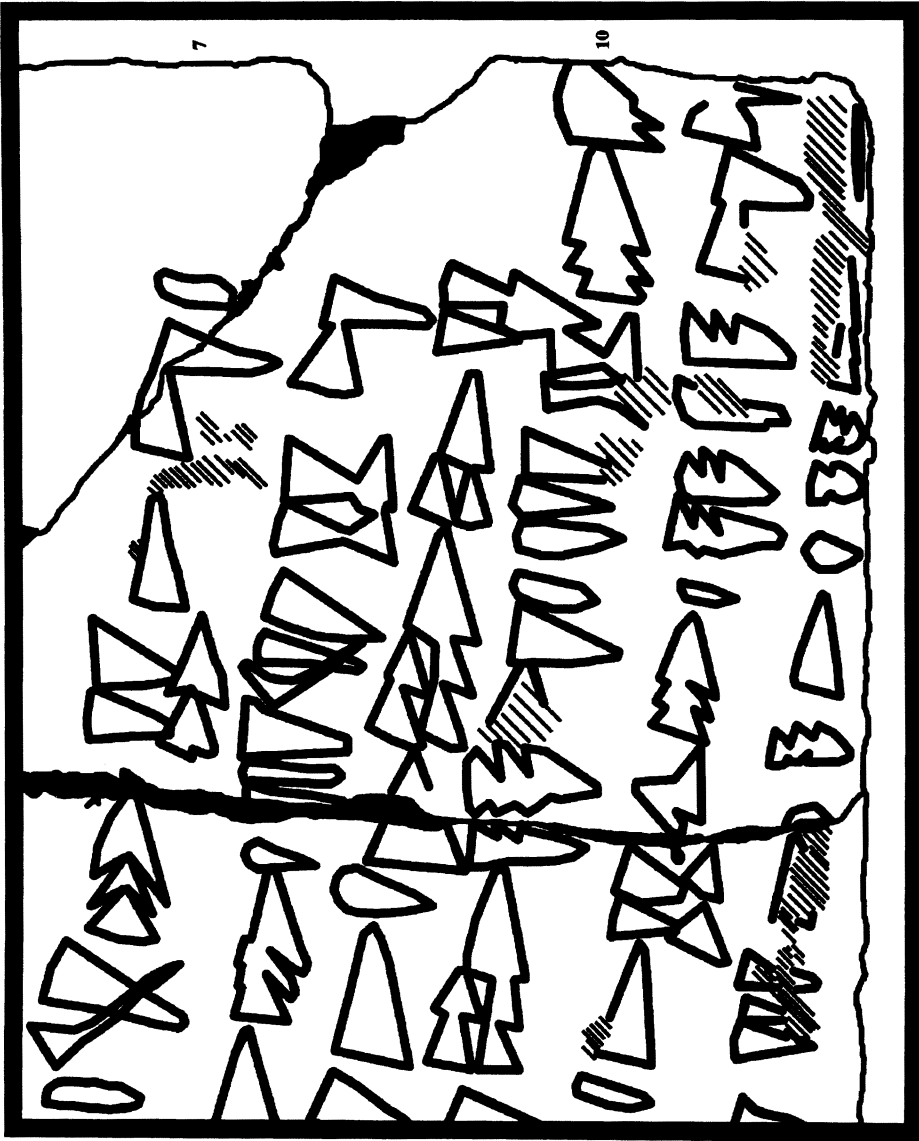


FIG. 6.—Drawing of KTU 1.83, obverse, lower right



FIG. 7.—*KTU* 1.83, bottom edge, showing lines 12 (right half)—14 and the *r* of reverse, line 1

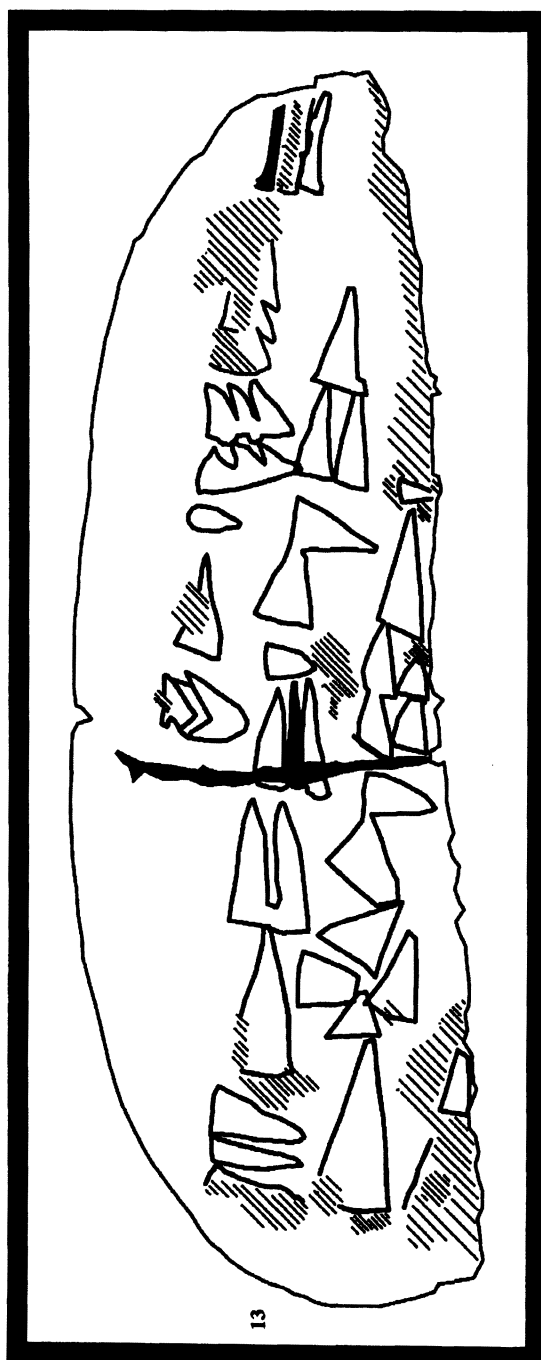


FIG. 8.—Drawing of *KTU* 1.83, bottom edge

The final letter of this line is actually found on the right edge of the tablet, at the bottom corner (see fig. 3). Directly beside the final *m* of line 11, but written vertically up the edge of the tablet, one can see the outline of a long horizontal letter, almost certainly to be identified as an *r*, although *k* theoretically could be possible. The upper line of one and probably two short horizontals, along with the line of the large right wedge are clear, and hints of a lower left wedge (its left edge and right point) are also discernible.

Line 13. *ltph*. This line also produced some letters not noted in earlier editions. Virolleaud read the line, *l.tp(?) []m*, while *KTU*² only reads *ltp []*. The word divider following the *l* in Virolleaud appears to be a pock mark on the tablet. The *h* that follows the *p* is broken by the large vertical crack but is absolutely clear (fig. 7), as is the word divider that follows it.

mk. In this case Virolleaud saw the *m*, while the editors of *KTU*² did not. Figure 7 shows the *m* very clearly, as well as the succeeding *k*, which no previous edition has noted.

Line 14. *thmr*. Virolleaud read this line as *n []m*, while *KTU*² reads *thmxx*. Although it is damaged, the bottom line of the first letter is too straight to identify with an *n*; the reading *t* seems assured. The *r*, while unnoted in the previous editions, is certain and almost completely preserved. It appears to belong with the previous three to form a single word. There appear to be traces just beyond the *r* of the upper part of a word divider, although this remains uncertain.

Reverse

Line 1. *ř*. This letter, pointed out to the author by Bordreuil and Pardee, is located on the transition between the lower edge and the beginning of the reverse and is visible on figure 7. Though damaged, the upper line of the letter, along with the main lines of the large right wedge, are still visible. The letter may be considered certain.

Line 7. *]xg̃t*. These letters slope up along the right edge of the tablet from what was either the seventh or eighth line on the reverse. They appear upside down in figure 3. The identity of the first two wedges, read here as *xg̃*, is uncertain. The author initially leaned toward identifying them as an *m*, as proposed in *KTU*². But Bordreuil and Pardee note in their collation that the two wedges do not actually meet. The left wedge is very badly damaged and is hard to identify. The right wedge is a well-preserved vertical, wider than any of the vertical wedges on the other *ms* on the tablet. While reading *m* here cannot be ruled out, at this time *xg̃* seems more likely.

Line 8. *š*. Parts of all three wedges of the letter are preserved, and the reading may be considered certain. This letter almost certainly belongs to the line directly below the line with the previous remains, rather than two lines below, as *KTU*² places it.

Translation and Commentary

Even though it is short and the obverse is fairly well preserved (10 of the 14 attested lines are complete), *KTU* 1.83 is very difficult to interpret. This is due to the ambiguity of the verb forms (the context does not allow us to determine with certainty the gender, number, or person of several of them!) and the uncertainty of meaning for a few key words, including *mḥnm*, the verb *trp*, which occurs twice in the text, and the words *pl*, *ht*, and *ltph* in lines 11–13. While the text clearly is describing a mythological conflict, the small size

of the tablet and the direct address of Yamm/Nahar in lines 11–12 may suggest that the myth is being used in an incantational/ritual context. Perhaps by recounting the binding of Yamm/Tunnan, the participant could gain control over the forces of chaos. But the loss of essentially the entire reverse of the tablet makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the function of the text. While the new readings clear up a number of obscurities, problems still remain. In interpreting the text, I have assumed that it was written in poetic form, with relatively balanced lines. The text follows, arranged according to the prosodic pattern that I would identify here:

xx]un.
 barṣ mḥn̄m.ṭrp ym
⁵l̄šnm.tlḥk.šmm.
 ṭṭrp ym.dnbtm.
 tan.lšbm tšt.
 irks ¹⁰lmrym.lbn̄
 pl.tbṭn.yymm
 hmlt.ḥt.ynh̄r
 ltph.mk ṭhm̄.

The following translation remains very tentative. Beginning with line 4, I suggest three primary alternatives (some renderings can be interchanged between them). Translation A assumes that Anat is the deity fighting Tunnan/Yamm. I consider this translation the most likely one:

- 4 In the land of Mahanaim . . . (imperative) Yamm!
 With (her) tongues she licks the heavens.
 With (her) twin tails she . . . s Yamm.
 She sets a muzzle on Tunnan.
- 10 She binds him on the heights of Lebanon.
 “Toward the desert (*or*: Dried up,) shall you be scattered, O Yamm!
 To the multitude of *ḥt*, O Nahar!
- 13 You shall not see (*or*: Indeed shall you see); lo! you shall foam up!”
 (*or*: “you shall be parched!” *Or*: *end quotation at line 12 and read*: At/To
 her *tp*, lo! she heaps up. . .).

Translation B assumes that the verbs in line 9 are second masculine singulars and that the deity is directly addressed in these lines. In addition, a different rendering of lines 11–12 is presented:

- 4 In the land of Mahanaim . . . (imperative) Yamm!
 The tongues lick the heavens,
 The twin tails . . . Yamm.
 You set a muzzle on Tunnan.
- 10 You bind him on the heights of Lebanon.
 In dryness shall you squirm, O Yamm!
 In a tumult of panic, O Nahar!

- 13 You shall not see (*or*: Indeed shall you see); lo! you shall foam up!
(*or*: lo! you shall be parched!)

Translation C renders several of the verbs as plurals:

- 4 In the land of Mahanaim they have . . . ed Yamm
(Their) tongues lick the heavens.
(Their) tails . . . Yamm.
May they set a muzzle on Tunnan.
10 May they bind him on the heights of Lebanon.
“Toward the desert (*or*: Dried up,) shall you be scattered, O Yamm!
To the multitude of *ḥt*, O Nahar!
13 You shall not see (*or*: Indeed shall you see); lo! you shall be parched!
(*or*: lo! you shall foam up!)”

Notes on the Translation

The triple translations highlight some of the ambiguities mentioned above. The opponent of Yamm is not named in the preserved text. Three possibilities arise: (1) Anat, who is perhaps the most plausible candidate, since lines 8–9 in particular contain language closely related to the account of her battle with Yamm/Tunnan in *KTU* 1.3.iii.37–42. (2) Baal, also well attested in conflict with Yamm. Again there is overlapping vocabulary between this text and the account of Baal’s defeat of Yamm in 1.2.iv.28–31. If this interpretation is correct, the verbs of lines 8–10 should be second person masculine singular, and the poet is addressing Baal directly. (3) Multiple opponents. This is perhaps the least likely interpretation, but it cannot be entirely ruled out. Line 3 may contain the end of a plural verb, which might indicate that *trp* in line 4 is also plural. The verbs in line 9, then, could be third plural jussives, and the poet could be calling upon the unnamed champions to bind the monster. There is no attested story of a battle between Yamm and more than one opponent (for example, Baal and Anat together?), but such a story is far from impossible.

Line 2. *il*.[. Although the two surviving letters could be the divine name *El*, or the common noun “god,” this is far from certain. They may also be the last two letters of a longer word. Since the letters are without context, and *El* does not appear elsewhere in the text, it seems prudent to refrain from translating the fragmentary line at all.

Line 3. *jun*. There is space for only two letters in the break at the beginning of the line. The word is clearly a verb, but most verbs would require three reconstructed consonants in the lacuna (prefix and two root consonants). We can thus narrow the search to verbs ending in ³ which show only one other root consonant in the prefix conjugation. There appear to be three likely candidates for the verb here—*yš³*, *b³*, and *nš³*. Several commentators have reconstructed the word with *yš³*,¹² but the other verbs cannot be ruled out. In addition, there are ambiguities about the verb’s gender and number. Virolleaud argued that Anat is the subject of the verb, thus interpreting it as third feminine singular (apparently assuming it is an energetic form).¹³ While this is possible, it is more likely, as Caquot points out, that it is a plural, although the person (third or second) remains unknown, be-

¹² See, for example, *PRU II*, p. 12; *KTU*², p. 101; and *TO II*, 28–29.

¹³ *PRU II*, p. 12.

cause of the broken context.¹⁴ It therefore does not seem appropriate to offer a translation of the word.

Lines 3/4. *barš mḥnm*. Again the broken context prevents us from interpreting this section with certainty. In the above translation, I have rendered it as a geographical reference, “in the land of Mahanaim,” connected prosodically to the following two words. The fact that another geographical name (“the heights of Lebanon”) is definitely mentioned in line 10 perhaps strengthens this interpretation of the present passage. Another possibility would be to associate *barš* with the previous line (i.e., “they . . . in/from/on the land/earth” or “he/she . . . s him from/on the land/earth.”) and assume that the next word names who or what *trps* Yamm. At this point, however, no compelling interpretation of *mḥnm* in such a context has presented itself.¹⁵

trp. I interpret this as either an imperative or a third masculine plural perfect verb, with *ym* as the direct object. If the verb is imperative, it could be understood as either masculine or feminine, singular or plural, depending on the identity of the opponent of Yamm/Tunnan in the following four lines. On the other hand, if it is a perfect verb, the probable presence of a plural in the previous line (presumably the first colon of the bicolon that concludes with this line) supports the interpretation of it as a plural, rather than singular verb. S. E. Loewenstamm’s proposal to read the verb as an infinitive in a purpose clause “to split the sea”¹⁶ seems unlikely, since such an infinitive is normally accompanied by *l* (cf. *UT* 9.26).

However we understand its form, the meaning of *trp* is also unknown, the root having no clear cognates in the related languages. J. Aisleitner¹⁷ related the word to Akkadian *šarāpu*, “to burn,” and rendered it “to singe, scorch.” This must be rejected, since the Hebrew cognate of *šarāpu*—*šārap*—shows that the first consonant of that Semitic root could not have been **ṭ*. Loewenstamm¹⁸ proposed that the word is a metathesis of the root *prt*, “to split.” This is possible, and the meaning would fit the context. Without discussion, F. M. Cross¹⁹ rendered it “swirled,” and Pardee²⁰ translated it as “swishes(?)” But none of these proposals are entirely compelling. Caquot and de Moor²¹ both follow the *KTU* reading of the verb as *rp* and render it respectively “to make gush,” and “break the neck.” These, of course, must now be rejected along with that reading. At this point, all that can be said is that the overall context of the tablet suggests the word has a connotation of conflict and probably indicates some kind of defeat for Yamm.

ym. The newly found presence of Yamm/Nahar in lines 11–12 strongly suggests that *ym* in this section (lines 4 and 6) refers to the god rather than to the nonpersonified sea as such.²²

Lines 5–7. These lines clearly form a bicolon and must be interpreted together. But the specific context is unclear. These lines have usually been interpreted as describing the

¹⁴ *TO II*, pp. 28–29.

¹⁵ Bruce Zuckerman has pointed out to me that a cognate in Syriac means, “nostrils,” which might work here, in view of the references to other body parts. But with no other attested cognate for the Syriac usage, caution must be used here.

¹⁶ Samuel E. Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1980), p. 357.

¹⁷ *WUS*, p. 344.

¹⁸ Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies*, p. 357.

¹⁹ Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 119.

²⁰ Dennis Pardee, “The Preposition in Ugaritic,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 7 (1975): 375.

²¹ Caquot in *TO II*, p. 29, and de Moor in *ARTU*, p. 182 and *CARTU*, p. 74.

²² Cf. *TO II*, p. 29; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, p. 119; Pardee, “Preposition,” p. 375.

dragonlike characteristics of Tunnan, “(His) tongues lick the heavens, (His) tails . . . the sea.” But now this interpretation seems problematic, since *ym*, the object of the verb *ttrp* in line 7, is more likely to be the god Yamm than a generic reference to the sea, and Yamm himself appears to be identified with Tunnan in the text. It seems, then, that these lines describe the opponent of Yamm/Tunnan, rather than the latter. Since the following lines appear to be the climax and conclusion of the conflict, it seems probable that lines 3–7 describe the actual battle. Although it might initially seem unlikely that a “good-guy” god, such as Anat or Baal, should be described with this kind of imagery, such an interpretation is in fact far from impossible. In *KTU* 1.23.61–62, the gods Shahar and Shalim are described with related terminology, “A lip to earth, a lip to heaven,” although they are benevolent gods. Note, from Israelite literature, that in Ps. 18:9, Yahweh is portrayed, quite positively, as a dragonlike monster coming to the rescue of the psalmist: “Smoke went up from his nose, fire devoured from his mouth.” This passage indicates that in contexts of conflict such imagery could be used for “good” deities as well as for “bad” ones.

Lines 8–10. The uncertainty of the identity of Yamm’s opponent reaches its climax here. Most scholars have analyzed the verbs as third feminine singular and assume that the lines describe Anat’s defeat of the dragon. There is good reason to do this. In the description of her exploits against Yamm/Nahar/Tunnan in *KTU* 1.3.iii.37–42, Anat says, *lišbm tnn*, “Did I not muzzle Tunnan?” using a verbal form of the noun *šbm* that appears here in line 8 in an identical context. There is no doubt that Ugarit had a tradition of a decisive conflict between the monsters of chaos and Anat, and 1.83 certainly fits that context very well. One can also view the verbs as second person singulars, however—“You set a muzzle on Tunnan./You bind him on the heights of Lebanon.” The latter interpretation is also plausible, particularly if this tablet is an incantation text. In that case, the speaker of the incantation could be calling upon the opponent of Tunnan/Yamm (either Anat or Baal) to bind the monster up. A third possibility, that the verbs should be read as plurals, i.e., “May they set a muzzle on Tunnan./ May they bind him on the heights of Lebanon,” cannot be entirely eliminated, since line 3 also has a possible plural verb. None of the three possibilities can be decisively confirmed, and thus the identity of the opponent of Tunnan remains open. In any case, the action of the bicolon is clear, whoever the subject might be.

tn(!)n. This emendation seems quite reasonable in view of the context. Epigraphically, it is simply a matter of the scribe not having impressed a third horizontal wedge for the letter.

šbm. There has been considerable discussion of this root. Several scholars have argued that it has the general meaning of “muzzle,” based on an Arabic cognate, *šibam*, which designates a type of object placed in an animal’s mouth to prevent biting or eating.²³ The correspondence of Arabic *š* to Ugaritic *š* is unusual but not impossible. Others have been uneasy about relating the word to the Arabic cognate and have made a variety of alternative proposals. J. Barr²⁴ related it to South Arabian *šbm*, found primarily in proper names, which has been interpreted as meaning “to be high.” Barr notes that rendering it, “to a high place,” parallels *mr̥ym* in the next line very well. Loewenstamm,²⁵ on the other hand, has noted the very precarious nature of the interpretation of the South Arabian word, which

²³ See the discussion in John Gray, “The Blood Bath of the Goddess Anat in the Ras Shamra Texts,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 11 (1979): 316.

²⁴ Barr, “Ugaritic and Hebrew ‘ŠBM,’” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 18 (1973): 17–39.

²⁵ Loewenstamm, *Comparative Studies*, pp. 468–69.

itself is not attested in clear contexts. While recognizing the problems with the proposed Arabic cognate for “muzzle,” he nevertheless argues that it appears to denote some type of fettering device. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz²⁶ relate the word to the root *šb*, “to destroy.” But the context in our passage does not support this interpretation. It seems best to assume that some type of restrictive device is referred to here, in parallel with the idea of binding found in the second colon.

lbnn. Virolleaud originally read *lbt*[here. But Aisleitner already proposed reading *lbn*[*n*] in *WUS*, in 1963.²⁷ As far as I can tell, Cross was the earliest translator to use this reading.²⁸ He was followed by several others,²⁹ and this insight has now been confirmed by the traces on the tablet.

Lines 11–12. These lines take on considerably more significance than in the past, since most of the right half of each was previously misread. Here we have a clear bicolon in which Yamm/Nahar is directly addressed, with the vocative *y* appearing before each name.

pl. This word appears four other times in the Ugaritic literary texts, but each occurrence is in a repeated, identical phrase and context:—*pl.ᵇnt.šdm* (1.6:iv:1, 2, 12, and 13). Its meaning in these passages has been ambiguous, and a number of proposals have been suggested. The context of these lines in the narrative of 1.6 is as follows: El has just had a dream that indicates Baal is once again alive, freed from Mot’s dominion. But Baal has not yet been seen, so El sends Shapshu a message, the intent of which is to have her search for Baal. El’s message begins with the twice-repeated words given above. The most common interpretation of *pl* is to relate it to Arabic *fall*—, “cracked, dry land, desert (n), to be dry, cracked (v).” If this is correct, the message to Shapshu reads, “Dried up (or: A desert) are the furrows of the fields.”³⁰ Other interpretations have been less compelling. Gordon,³¹ followed by Caquot,³² tentatively proposed that *pl* might be the conjunction *p*, “and,” with the preposition *l*, “for.” B. Margalit opted to identify it with Mishnaic Hebrew *ply*, “to search,” reading it as an imperative, “Search the furrows of the fields.”³³ The new context in 1.83 argues for the more common understanding, “dryness, dry land, desert.” One might render it either as an adjective, “Dried up, you shall be scattered, O Yamm,” or as an accusative noun with a directional connotation, “Toward the desert shall you be scattered.”

lbt̄n. A verb *bt̄* appears three times in 1.2.iv.28, 29, and 31, the climax of the story of Baal’s defeat of Yamm/Nahar. Because of the similar context, our verb is likely to be from the same root and have the same meaning. There is not, however, unanimity concerning the meaning of *bt̄* in 1.2. Some scholars relate it to Hebrew *boš*, “to be ashamed.” Others identify it with Arabic *batta*, “to scatter, disperse, spread.” Unfortunately, the context of

²⁶ M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, “*šB*, *šBM* und *UDN* im Kontext von *KTU* 1.3 III 35B–IV 4 und *KTU* 1.83.8,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 14 (1982): 78, 80.

²⁷ See under *rks*, no. 2513 in the lexicon. The reading does not appear in the entry on *lbnn*.

²⁸ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, p. 119.

²⁹ See, for example, de Moor in *ARTU*, p. 182; Pardee, “Preposition,” p. 369, and “The Preposition in Ugaritic (2),” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 8 (1976): 267; and even Dietrich and Loretz, “*šB*,” p. 78, although the reading in *KTU*² is *lbnt*.

³⁰ This or similar renderings may be found in G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh, 1956), p. 113; J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and*

Legends (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 78; H. L. Ginsberg in *ANET*, 3d ed., p. 141; Michael D. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Louisville, Kentucky, 1978), p. 113; and de Moor in *ARTU*, p. 92. Discussions of the meaning of the word are found in Peter J. van Zijl, *Baal: A Study of Texts in Connexion with Baal in the Ugaritic Epics* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972), pp. 207–9; and Kjell Aartun, “Neue Beiträge zum ugaritischen Lexikon (II),” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 17 (1986): 14–15.

³¹ *UT*, p. 468.

³² *TO II*, pp. 262–63.

³³ Baruch Margalit, *A Matter of ‘Life’ and ‘Death’* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1980), pp. 168–70.

the passage, in which Ashtart rebukes Baal just after his defeat of Yamm, is not clear enough to determine decisively whether she thinks Baal is being too harsh with Yamm (thus, “Be ashamed, O Mighty Baal,/ Be ashamed, O Rider of the Clouds”) or too lenient (thus, “Scatter (him), O Mighty Baal, Scatter (him), O Rider of the Clouds!”). The third appearance of the verb, in line 31, however, strongly supports the latter understanding of the passage. Here *ybt* appears with a pronominal suffix (*nn*), which is most naturally understood as an accusative suffix, indicating that the verb is transitive, rather than stative.³⁴ Thus Ashtart is encouraging Baal to scatter Yamm in order to consummate his victory over him. Such a meaning fits quite plausibly in our context too, although we must assume that the verb is a passive form, second masculine singular here, “you shall be scattered.” The motif, in which the conquered enemy is literally scattered, occurs in the case of Mot in *KTU* 1.6.ii.31–37, as well as in Ps. 74:13–14.

A less likely possibility, but one that cannot be entirely ignored, is that the verb derives from the root *bṭn*, which is known elsewhere only in nominal forms, meaning “serpent, sea monster.” If this is a verbal form from that root, presumably its general meaning has to do with twisting, squirming, and thus it could be rendered as “you shall squirm.” The close parallel between our passage and *KTU* 1.2.iv.28–31, however, argues strongly for the previous proposal.

yymm. There can be little doubt that this is to be understood as the proper name, Yamm, with the vocative particle *y* preceding it, and an enclitic *m* following. This is paralleled in the next line with *ynhr*, “O Nahar.” The identical form *yymm* is also found in 1.2.i:36, *ḥbdk.b^cl.yymm*, “Baal is your servant, O Yamm.”

hmlt. This noun appears several times in Ugaritic in parallel with *nšm*, “human beings,” and *lim*, “peoples,” and is best understood as “multitude, people.” The Hebrew cognate means, “roaring, rushing sound, tumult,” but this seems much less likely in the context.

ḥt. The meaning of this word is unclear. It may be cognate to Akkadian *ḥattu* and Hebrew *ḥat*, “terror, fear, panic.” Thus the phrase, *hmlt ḥt*, presumably in some way parallel to *pl* of the previous line, might mean, “Toward the multitude/people of terror.” A second possible etymology would relate it to the Akkadian verb *ḥatû*, “to smite, destroy.” A cognate of that verb appears in Ugaritic in *KTU* 1.16.vi.1 and 13. In this case, the nominal form might be rendered, “toward the multitude of destruction.” Neither of these proposals is fully satisfying. Whatever its meaning, this reference to a group of people in the context of the disposition of Yamm’s body suggests a relationship to the description of Yahweh’s defeat of Leviathan in Ps. 74:14, *titt^enennû ma²akāl l^cām l^cṣiyyîm*, “You gave him as food to the people, the desert ones.” These passages both contain the notion of throwing the monster into the desert and the appearance of a “people” who seem to benefit from the presence of the monster’s body there but whose exact identity is not clear.

Another possible reading of the word is the GN, Hatti. This, however, makes little sense in the context and is not very likely.

Line 13. *ltpḥ*. Also frustratingly ambiguous. One can analyze this in two very different ways. (1) Take the root to be *tp*, a noun with a masculine or feminine suffix and the

³⁴ See Mark Smith’s discussion in *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1994), pp. 356–57. De Moor, in *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba^clu*, AOAT 16 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1971), p. 139, argues that the suffix should be understood as dative

and translates the passages as “Ba^clu the Almighty was ashamed at her.” While possible, this seems much more awkward (pronouns in the dative sense are considerably rarer and usually occur on transitive, rather than stative, verbs; cf. *UT*, p. 39).

preposition *l* as prefix. The noun *tp* appears to have two meanings in Ugaritic, “tambourine” and “beauty,” neither of which fits the context in any obvious way. (2) Take the word as a second masculine singular imperfect verb from *ph*, with a *l* particle preceding it. Since Ugaritic *l* can be either a negative particle or an emphatic one, *lph* can be interpreted as either “you shall not see,” or “indeed shall you see.” Although this interpretation is not immediately compelling in the context either, it seems more plausible than the first proposal.

mk. A well-known Ugaritic particle, “lo, then.”

thmr. This is the first Ugaritic attestation of a verb *hmr*. There are two roots from which it might derive. (1) A verb, *hmr*, meaning “to foam, surge, to heap up,” attested in Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic. In fact, a nominal form, *hōmer*, appears in Habakkuk 3:15, in a verse describing Yahweh’s defeat of Yam—*dāraktā bayyām sūseka hōmer mayim rabbim*—“You tread upon Yam with your horses, the foaming of many waters.” The very similar context here certainly suggests the likelihood of a comparable meaning in our text. (2) A second root, *hmr*, means “to be hot, parched, angry.” This root is found in Arabic, Mishnaic Hebrew, and Aramaic. Because of the previous reference to the desert, such a meaning as “you shall be parched,” would also be possible in this context. But since the tablet breaks off at this point, no certainty about the meaning of the word can be reached.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEXT

Although *KTU* 1.83 is fragmentary and ambiguous, there are several aspects of it that provide significant improvements in our understanding of the Ugaritic/Canaanite story of the conflict between the sea and the forces of order and of its relationship to the Israelite versions of the tale. We shall briefly note the following, some of which have been mentioned above:

1. Lines 8–12 may now play a role in the long-standing issue concerning the relationship between Yamm/Nahar and the dragonlike monsters who appear in some of the passages that describe the conflict between Baal or Anat and the forces of chaos (Tunnan, Lotan, Shalyat). Although some of the later biblical texts identify the dragons Tannin and Leviathan with Yam, the Sea, many scholars have argued that in the Ugaritic forms of the stories Yamm, Lotan, and Tunnan are distinct characters and that Yamm may not have been portrayed as a dragon at all in Ugaritic myth.³⁵ *KTU* 1.83, however, now can be seen as strongly suggesting that Yamm/Nahar in lines 4–7 and 11–12 is the same being as Tunnan in lines 8–10 and that he is indeed envisioned in the text as a dragonlike monster.

This in turn has a significant bearing on the interpretation of *KTU* 1.3.iii.38–46, the description of Anat’s battles with the opponents of Baal. The first five cola of this section are of critical importance here. They read as follows:

lmḥšt.mdd il ym.
lkltnhr.il.rbm

³⁵ See the discussions on this in John Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 12–17; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, pp. 118–20; Mary K. Wakeman, *God’s Battle with the Monster*

(Leiden, 1973), pp. 92–105. Note that Bordreuil and Pardee identify Yamm and the dragons in “Le combat de Ba’lu avec Yammu d’après les textes ougaritiques,” *MARI* 7 (1993): 70.

lišt**bm.tnn.iš**tm**dh**³⁶

mhšt.b**ṭn.ḥ**ql**n**

šlyt.d.šbḥt.raš**m**

Did I not smite El's beloved, Yamm?
Did I not bring Nahar, the great god, to an end?
Did I not muzzle Tunnan, destroy him?
I smote the twisting serpent,
Shalyat, the seven-headed one.

Since the first three cola each begin with a verb that is preceded by a *l* particle, the most natural way to divide these lines is to make the first three a tricolon, with the last two a bicolon. To do so, however, indicates that Tunnan is a parallel name for Yamm/Nahar. Those who have preferred to distinguish Yamm and Tunnan have tended to connect the third colon with the following two instead.³⁷ But now that 1.83 provides an example of the use of Tunnan as a designation for Yamm, there is no longer a reason to doubt that the first three cola belong together and that all three lines refer to the same character.³⁸

If this is correct, then the apparent merging of Yam and the dragon in Israelite texts (for example, Ps. 74:12–17), can be seen, not as an Israelite innovation, but as a continuation of Canaanite tradition.

2. There are also a number of elements in this small text that seem to provide illumination for aspects of the Israelite depictions of the conflict between Yahweh and Yam/Tannin/Leviathan, although many of these remain tentative. Note should be made of the following:

(1) The scattering of Yamm in the desert (line 11) seems to be the first explicit Ugaritic parallel to the desert location into which Yahweh sets Leviathan's corpse in Ps. 74:14.³⁹

(2) Although both passages are a bit obscure, 1.83: 12 and Ps. 74:14 seem to refer to a group of people in the desert for whom the scattering of the dragon in that region is a boon. This motif is not elsewhere attested in the Ugaritic texts.

(3) The appearance of the root *ḥmr* in line 14 and in the thematically related Habakkuk 3:15 provides another probable lexical link between the Ugaritic and Israelite conflict stories.

(4) If our argument is correct that the dragon imagery of 1.83: 5–7 must describe the opponent of Yamm, rather than Yamm, this would be the first Ugaritic text which portrays a “good” deity with dragonlike characteristics (particularly the double tails). It, then, would provide a background for the positive portrayal of Yahweh as a dragon in Ps. 18:9.

KTU 1.83 thus reinforces the impression that the myth of the conflict between the young king of the gods and the sea is one of the more significant areas of cultural kinship between Canaan and Israel.

³⁶ The reading, *ištm^{dh}*, was proposed by Pardee in “Will the Dragon Never Be Muzzled?,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 16 (1984): 253–54. It conforms to the traces on the tablet more convincingly than *KTU* 2's *ištm.lh*.

³⁷ See, for example, van Ziel, *Baal*, pp. 65–66. Dietrich and Loretz, “*ŠB*,” pp. 80–81, divide the line into two short cola, constituting a separate bicolon. This seems unlikely in the midst of a series of longer lines.

³⁸ On the prosody, see already Pardee, “Will the Dragon Never Be Muzzled?,” pp. 254–55. I would

now argue that all five cola refer to a single opponent and that Lotan, who is described in *KTU* 1.5.i.1–3 with the terms *bṭn.ḥqln* (“the twisting serpent”) and *šlyt.d.šbḥt.rašm* (“Shalyat the seven-headed one”), as here, is also simply another name for Yamm.

³⁹ As noted above, Yamm is scattered abroad in *KTU* 1.2.iv, but it is not clear in that passage (the text is somewhat broken) exactly where he is scattered. Cf. Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, pp. 324, 357.